gs

Decomposers

The bird fauna of northern Australia is notable also for its integrity. Many native bird species that have declined drastically in temperate Australia remain common and widespread in the north: such species include red-tailed black-cockatoos, bush stone-curlews, magpie geese, Australian bustards and the grey-crowned babbler. Also common to the Northern Territory are Wedge tailed eagles and Brolgas.

Both freshwater and estuarine crocodiles are liable to turn up wherever there is water in northern tropical Australia. Young ones feed on insects, crustaceans and frogs, the type of prey changing as they grow. Adult freshwater crocs eat large amounts of fish but food from terrestrial origins, such as invertebrates, birds, and small reptiles and mammals make up as much as 40 per cent of their diet.

The main elements of the mammal fauna of northern Australia reflect that of the continent as a whole. About a third of the native fauna are bats (mostly small and insectivorous), about a fifth are rodents, and almost all the rest are marsupials — including kangaroos and wallabies, bandicoots, possums and dasyurids (quolls, dunnarts, phascogales and antechinuses). Most of the north has only one monotreme (the echidna).

As the wet season flows overtop river banks, fish and other animals make the most of expanded feeding grounds, moving out onto the floodplains. As the floodwaters recede, these animals take the nutrients and energy obtained from the floodplain, back to the river channel.